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Diversifying (and Politicizing) Sport Psychology Through Cultural Studies: A Promising Perspective Revisited

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to expand upon our earlier work (Fisher, Butryn, & Roper, 2003) which introduced the core concepts of cultural studies and their application to the field of sport psychology. More specifically, we provide: (a) a critique and interrogation of the dominant practices of academic sport psychology; (b) a discussion of how one locates oneself in the university in general and the athletic department in particular as a consultant and the ramifications of such locations; and (c) suggestions as to how three existing groups could be used by consultants to connect social justice and sport in ways that promote citizenship and democratic engagement for both student-athletes and consultants themselves. We remain hopeful that sport psychology serves as a potential site for such critique, interrogation, and ultimately, social change.

Introduction

We argued in our first paper (Fisher, Butryn & Roper, 2003) that training in cultural studies may enhance sport psychology effectiveness. We maintain that the in-depth study of culture and power has an important place in sport psychology research, teaching and consulting. Some scholars (see Green, 1996, for example) have described the somewhat uneasy relationship that cultural studies has with other disciplines in the academy. However, they propose that such tensions are necessary to move those disciplines

forward. Similar to Green (1996) and others (see Storey, 1996), we put forth that such movement in the field of sport psychology could begin with: (a) a critique and interrogation of dominant sport psychology practices – both in the academy and on the playing field – which are based on liberal-humanist and social democratic orthodoxies (and their supporting disciplines); (b) a personal examination by sport psychology professionals of their own location in the university and athletic department (if they work in/for one) to determine what the institutional structures, legal/political/financial conditions of existence, and particular flows of power and knowledge are; and (c) a hunt for appropriate constituencies or groups that connect social justice and sport, either locally or nationally. We end with suggestions for future research and practice integrating cultural studies and sport psychology.

The Critique and Interrogation of Dominant Sport Psychology Practices

For a compelling overview of what the project of cultural studies is, some would argue that there is no better reader than the one edited by John Storey (1996). In it, authors from the United States, Britain and Australia attempt to (chronologically) define what cultural studies is (and what it is not). Green (1996), for example, begins to break the boundary and frame of the traditional disciplines via cultural studies and engages in “...an analysis of the relation of cultural studies to the established disciplines; to some received working practices of higher education; and to the purposes and possibilities of intellectual work from such a location” (p.49). While some would argue that the “natural” home of cultural studies (setting aside for the moment what we might mean by “natural”) is the discipline of sociology (both within and outside of sport), we propose that the discipline of sport psychology could also serve as a site where the traditional boundaries could be interrogated and a new frame put in place that would actually expand our ability to describe everyday practices related to sport and exercise.

In order to dissolve such disciplinary frames as we did in our earlier challenge (Fisher, Butryn, & Roper, 2003) we continue to ask: What forms of knowledge have been utilized in sport psychology? What politics do such forms contain? And how might a cultural studies framework dismantle them? For starters, let’s examine any introductory sport psychology text to determine which topics make up the discipline’s established boundaries of knowledge and which disciplinary homes they originate. Flipping through such texts (see for example Duda, 1998; Gill, 2000; Weinberg & Gould, 2003) we discover that sport psychology is bounded by such constructs as “motivation”, “anxiety”, “psychological skills and skills training”, “group dynamics”, “aggression”, “morality”, “self-concept”, “body image”, “affect, mood and emotion” and “special topics”/“special considerations” which include gender, race, sexual orientation, the disabled, ethics, developmental issues, and cross-cultural concerns. Already we see that certain constructs are *primary* (i.e., motivation and anxiety) while others are *marginal* (i.e., gender, race, sexual orientation, and the disabled). Examining exercise psychology introductory textbooks (see for example, Berger, Pargman, & Weinberg, 2002; Weinberg & Gould, 2003), the boundaries are comparable with a focus on exercise and “the quality of life”, “enhanced self-concept”, “mood and mood alteration”, “personality”, “injury”, “motivation”, and “concerns”/“specific populations” featuring “eating disorders”,

“exercise addiction and dependence”, “children in exercise”, “older individuals”, and “substance abuse.” Again, we see that self-concept, personality and motivation are key to defining disciplinary boundaries while the experiences of younger, older and “disordered” individuals are outside the frame/norm of study¹.

Clearly, such framing has been shaped by the discipline of psychology (in addition to kinesiology/exercise science/physical education) with its focus on “scientific study”, “psychological constructs”, “controlling variables” and the establishment of laboratories within which to observe and manipulate human behavior. The goal – just as in any “hard science” – is to master the scientific method, systematically examine and describe phenomena, and refine and develop theory. As Gill (2000) explains (based on Thomas & Nelson, 1996), the scientific method is “...a series of [4] steps to solve problems” which consists of “Step 1: Developing the Problem; Step 2: Formulating the Hypothesis; Step 3: Gathering the Data; [and] Step 4: Analyzing and Interpreting Results” (p.27-28). What has not been included in such framing – as Gill (2000) rightly points out – are other sources of knowledge such as intuition, tenacity, logic, and authority (for a more complete discussion of other sources of knowledge, see Thomas & Nelson, 1996). Feminist sport psychologists like Gill (see *The Sport Psychologist* special issue on feminist sport psychology, Volume 15, No.4, 2001) and other feminist postmodern/poststructuralist scholars have revealed that knowledge “...is not a neutral entity, but a set of practices that produce relationships of power” (Fernandes, 2003, p. 79; see also Belenkey, Goldberger, Clinchy & Tarule, 1986; 1996). Further, they advocate that certain kinds of knowledges – in the academy in general and sport psychology in particular - are, therefore, marginalized and deemed unimportant (i.e., intuition). Of interest is the fact that such knowledges are primarily connected to women and people of color. The same case can be made for the discipline of sport psychology.

If we turn our attention to the frame by which we’ve defined the history of U.S. sport psychology (and many would argue that such framing is Eurocentric in that it leads others to believe that U.S. sport psychology history is THE history of sport psychology), we observe that the “founders” reported in introductory textbooks (see Weinberg & Gould, 2003 for example) are: (a) all male (i.e., Triplett, Griffith); (b) Caucasian; and (c) have an experimental or behavioral psychology background. This is obviously related to who was allowed/located in the academy during the development of the discipline (i.e., male Caucasian scientists). However, many postmodern/poststructural theorists and historiographers contend that the development of a discipline is more than a history of individuals. Further, as explicated before, there are concrete consequences for constructing the discipline of sport psychology as a discourse based on scientific study and constructs evolving from experimental and behavioral psychology.

Applied sport psychology can also be deconstructed and transformed through a cultural studies (and, in particular, postmodern) critique and interrogation of the ways it reproduces and is embedded within a certain set of academic/disciplinary and university athletic interests. As we mentioned previously (Fisher, Butryn, & Roper, 2003), Ingham, Blissmer and Wells-Davidson (1999) as well as other sport studies scholars are of the opinion that sport psychology consultants are kind-hearted folks who apply a “band-aid

approach” to working with athletes, teaching them such techniques as imagery and positive self-talk and sending them back out onto the field without any in-depth analysis of the ways they (both the consultant and athlete) are contributing to the “big business” of collegiate athletics. However, this is just a first step. We believe it isn’t enough to teach consultants to deconstruct the power dynamics inherent in the sport sphere. We view training and knowledge in, and implementation of a cultural studies framework to be, as Fernandes (2003) writes, “...a form of ethical practice that cannot be fully contained either by social scientific claims of neutrality and objectivity or by a postmodern focus on power” (p.79).

Locating Oneself in the University and Athletic Department

Within sport psychology, and more specifically the Association for the Advancement of Applied Sport Psychology (AAASP), debates have raged over issues of accreditation, training and supervision, the efficacy of various intervention techniques and the future of the field in general. Should consultants be required to have backgrounds in clinical psychology? How can we expand opportunities for young consultants and graduate students? What is the best way to conduct imagery sessions? While these types of questions continue to preoccupy many researchers and practitioners, scholars from sport sociology have leveled harsh criticisms and in some cases indictments against the field.

For example, Hoberman (1992) labeled sport psychology as the “ultimate sport technology” warning that athletes competing under the current performance ethos of elite sport are vulnerable to psychological manipulations by consultants eager to demonstrate the power of mental training techniques. More recently, Ingham, Blissmer, and Wells-Davidson (1999) pointed to several limitations of the “sport psychological imagination” arguing that the field fails to integrate important critical issues into its practice. Ingham and colleagues describe how the “Prolympic self” that involves the dissolving of the lines between professional and amateur athletes has led to a commodification of athletes. In other words, in the market system of successful Division-I programs, college athletes have instruments of production whose worth in one sense is tied to their productivity and thus, they are dehumanized to an extent. This commodification, in turn, has made them in effect expendable. Ingham and colleagues (1999) recommend a re-meeting of athletes’ inner worlds of the psyche and the psychological expertise of sport psychology consultants with the emphasis of many sport sociologists on the sociocultural and political environments in which athletes exist.

Unfortunately, few within sport psychology have seriously addressed these criticisms and the gap has arguably increased between critical sport scholars who employ a cultural studies perspective and applied sport psychology. This “identity crisis” of the applied field might not be such a pressing issue if there was no demand for consultants’ services and if student-athletes, particularly those at Division-I programs, were an active political force on campus and in their local communities. Regarding the first point, applied sport psychology is gaining momentum within the institutionalized sporting infrastructure of higher education and some research has shown that consultants are having an increasing amount of contact with student-athletes in Division-I programs. For example, Voight and

Callaghan (2001) surveyed 115 Division-I programs on their use of sport psychology services and found that 53% of the institutions used some form of consulting. The services provided varied ranging from basic life skills training to visualization techniques and other forms of psychological skills training to more mainstream counseling-related issues. While many of those employed were part-time professionals hired by individual coaches, 17 athletic departments themselves retained the part-time or full-time services of consultants, suggesting that a percentage of schools value these services to an extent that they take financial resources out of their coffers to do so. Although it is healthy for the profession (in terms of growth and job opportunities) that more Division-I institutions are using sport psychology services of some kind, it is important to consider the environment in which the athletes and consultants themselves exist. Indeed, numerous scholars have examined the more problematic aspects of intercollegiate athletics (Brooks & Althouse, 1993; Eitzen & Sage, 2004; Sperber, 2000).

Regarding the second point, although there are numerous positive examples of athletes going into local communities in some capacity to perform various forms of service, critical sport scholars like Sage and Eitzen (2003) have long argued that college sport is generally conservative in nature and that college athletes have become largely apolitical and increasingly self-centered. In fact, in many ways, the applied field stands in the midst of the contentious space that is anchored by critical sport sociology on one end and sport management on the other. Sport sociologists have been critical of the corporatization of college sport for decades and they have paid particular attention to the commodification of student-athletes and their bodies. Eitzen (2000) uses the term "college sport plantation" in which athletes, particularly African American football and basketball players, perform immense amounts of labor and receive rewards that are severely disproportionate to the profits they generate for athletic departments. Minority athletes in revenue-producing sports also face other obstacles including social isolation, cultural differences, misperceptions from white students and professors and in some cases a lack of support for the academic endeavors from everyone from coaches to friends and family (Hawkins, 2000).

Eitzen (1999) also notes what he sees as a resemblance between Division-I programs and a totalitarian regime in which athletes have relatively little free speech and virtually no basis for challenging the system that is in control. While perhaps an overstatement (and while individual coaching philosophies and leadership styles certainly factor into athletes' experiences), the culture of high-level college athletics is not built to foster the development of character and/or quality young men and women that the NCAA often trumpets. In short, the landscape of college athletics at larger universities, particularly "big-time" sports programs, are not revered for their democratic processes. For example, if athletes and consultants are not even aware of local, national, and global issues on a simplistic level, then how can they truly exhibit character and grow to become informed citizens after their playing and consulting days are over? More importantly for this paper, what role might the field of sport psychology integrated with cultural studies play in helping college athletes and consultants develop as engaged citizens as well as athletes and consultants?

The “rebel” consultant? In his insightful book “*Beer and circus: How college sports is crippling undergraduate education*”, Murray Sperber (2000) notes that the ties between what he calls “rebel” student-athletes and the larger political and artistic movements of the 1960s and 1970s were a profound contribution to higher education in that they, more than any other group of students, were responsible for dismantling the “ivory tower” mentality that separated athletes from the “outside” world. However, such politically engaged consciousness aimed at bettering society has waned and the “rebel” athlete, Sperber (2000) suggests, is in danger of becoming merely a paragraph in the handbook of late 60s counterculture. If, as feminists and post-structuralists have long argued, “the personal is political”, then what might applied sport psychology do to promote the growth of that aspect of the “person” that contributes to community, sees the politics in his or her everyday life and raises critical questions even if they involve a critique of those holding positions of power over them? Moreover, what are the possibilities for consultants to become the “rebels” they would encourage athletes to be? What implications would this have for the applied field and for the larger institutionalized power structure of high-level intercollegiate sport?

Of course, consultants have several options in terms of how they negotiate the politicized landscape of college sport. First, consultants can certainly choose to be completely non-critical in their perspective and adopt what Coakley (2003) calls a functionalist approach to consulting. From a functionalist perspective, the relationship between sport psychology practitioners, athletes, coaches and administrators should be characterized by cooperation and synergy with all efforts made toward maintaining unity. However, as we have discussed from a cultural studies perspective we must seriously address issues of power and potential sources of conflict among the aforementioned parties. Further, from our perspective, consultants should adopt a more critical stance and place athletes’ agency above all else, even the interests of coaches and administrators.

To this end, AAASP guidelines for certification and the AAASP code of ethics state that consultants must demonstrate some training in sociocultural issues and that the well-being of the client should always be protected. The “rebel” consultant, however, would go beyond the minimum AAASP standards and, for example, form closer alliances with critical sports studies scholars and other organizations who aim to challenge existing NCAA institutional power dynamics and problematic practices as well as work in the interests of social justice outside of sport. For instance, sport sociologists have been heavily involved in a coalition aimed at eliminating the use of Native American mascots at all levels of sport and within academia; in fact, the entire February 2004 issue of the *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* was devoted to critically analyzing Native American mascots and the impact their usage has on participants and spectators. The “rebel” consultant, whether s/he works for an institution still using such mascots or not, would be an active part of attempting to end what many critical scholars and community activists see as a blatantly insensitive and perhaps outright racist practice.

Asking critical questions in a conservative athletic environment: Negotiating the paradox. Of course, there are inherent tensions involved in asking critical questions of athletes, consultants and especially coaches, not the least of which is that sport, as

previously mentioned, is largely conservative (Eitzen & Sage, 2004; Eitzen, 1999). Thus, an applied sport psychology ethos that centralizes the role of the social and political development of student-athletes and consultants is, in a sense, a counterhegemonic practice designed to help each not simply perform better by blindly obeying the rules (in their sport and in consulting), but to ask critical questions related to college sport and larger social issues. While individuals may be capable of becoming functioning citizens without these skills, we argue that an understanding of power and the ability to confidently critique power relations within college sport society is crucial to social agency and citizenship. It should be noted that we are not advocating any sort of “radical or “leftist” sport psychology per se – although some may choose that route - but one that simply recognizes its own potential role in helping student-athletes and consultants view themselves as members of a democratic society in which citizenship and critical questioning is fundamentally important.

This is especially necessary at this moment – as previously mentioned - since applied sport psychology is at the point where it has been accepted into the intercollegiate infrastructure at major Division-I institutions to the extent that Athletic Directors have become more open to sport psychology service provision and in a small number of cases have agreed to fund mental training facilities and graduate students who assist in working with athletes. However, the relationship between sport psychology and athletic departments remains tenuous; thus, the political battles that “rebel” consultants might face with administrative forces could undermine not only their own abilities to work with athletes but the further growth of the field within academic institutions as well. In short, there is a potential for conflicts of interest if consultants are being critical of coaches and administrators who have any vested financial interests in the “commodified student-athlete” and/or if consultants’ services are retained and supported by the athletic department or individual coaches. As an example, if a star athlete tells the consultant that s/he has lost his/her love for the game and wants to quit the team, the consultant on the payroll of the coach or athletic department is faced with a difficult situation. While most professionals in the field would certainly side with the athletes’ best interests, our point is that consultants working with intercollegiate athletic departments may face increased ethical dilemmas.

This means that such suggestions for a politicization of sport psychology may be condemnatory of the very system that some consultants rely on for support. However, as Donnelley (1988) points out, there is room for negotiation and resistance in any power relationship even though there may be obstacles that discourage consultants and athletes themselves from doing so. Unfortunately, no research has investigated sport psychology consultants’ experiences of power and whether they feel enough agency to weigh in against the dominant power structure in anything other than superficial ways. One fruitful research project would be to conduct in-depth, semi-structured interviews with consultants related to where consultants get their news on politics and social issues, whether and to what degree they are concerned with these issues, their experience with voting, and their awareness of power issues related to sport. Perhaps one of the main sources and spheres of political dialogue amongst consultants and athletes is the practice arena, and given our above assertion that it is mostly a conservative sphere, this may not

encourage the kind of critical democratic reflection we are espousing. In addition, if consultants are being paid by conservative athletic departments, perhaps they purposefully remove themselves from the political process and these types of social issues.

If given a chance, however, we believe that student-athletes as well as consultants could readily identify examples of political issues within the context of their sport experiences (i.e., living with the “student-athlete” or the “consultant/shrink” label, how power is distributed unequally among different teams, how “minor” sport athletes and consultants might receive differential treatment by athletic trainers, and the hierarchical nature of the college sport environment). Of interest would be whether athletes and consultants saw themselves as political and social agents either on or off the field and how those two spheres are related. In addition, because an important part of citizenship is a willingness to contribute to the creation and maintenance of community, it would be important to ask consultants if they feel any obligations to community, whether it be campus, local (metropolitan), national, or global. It would not be surprising – due to reasons related to both time and other university obligations – if consultants felt that their primary obligation was to their university commitments first and to larger sociopolitical issues only if they had time left over. Thus, perhaps consultants working in a university setting may not be apathetic or unconcerned with politics and the workings of democracy, but rather are so overwhelmed with their academic and athletic lives that political engagement becomes almost an afterthought.

Appropriate Constituencies for Sport and Exercise Psychology Professionals

In a recent graduate-level sociology of sport course taught by the third author, the students were asked to read a series of introductory articles devoted to sport, power and ideology (Beal, 1995; Foley, 1990) and to subsequently write a critique of the readings. The second week of class began with the students being asked to share what they had written and to address any questions they had pertaining to the articles. Early in the class discussion a student raised his hand and questioned - “so what?” When probed further, the student suggested that while it was “interesting” to read about the ways in which the skateboarding subculture may be a site of social resistance (Beal, 1995) and how a high school football team in a Texas border community may represent a site for counterhegemonic cultural practices (Foley, 1990), he saw no “real” value or application of the material to his future career as a sport and exercise psychology practitioner. This student was not alone as several other students began to question their “need” to take such a course – a course that, from the instructor’s perspective, challenged students to: (a) describe the politicized relationship between sport, culture, and society; (b) recognize and analyze the role of power in sport; and (c) understand how race, gender, sexual orientation, class and ability are negotiated within sport.

As discussed in our previous paper, a critical component to cultural studies is the notion of praxis or the integration of theory, research, and practice (Hall, 1996). At the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, cultural studies scholars have called for

“groups that attempt to think of their work in relation to the problems of the nearest appropriate constituency” (Green, 1996, p. 57). Moreover, there is a need to relate one’s work to struggles for social change and to serve as a bridge between different communities. For the cultural studies scholar, and we argue the sport psychology professional, a critical question becomes: What is the social significance of one’s work? Again, it is important to recognize that answering this question can be problematic for those situated within hierarchical institutions and those who confront reward structures that privilege individual distinction (academia, athletics) over collective social change.

In our previous paper, we speculated on the ways in which sport psychology educators, researchers, and practitioners can *utilize* a cultural studies framework to enhance their research and applied work. Furthermore, we attempted to “tie issues of power and privilege at the theoretical level with ‘real life’ experiences of athletes and consultants” (Fisher, Butryn, & Roper, 2003, p. 397). While we noted the existence of groups designed to promote greater interaction between athletes and their communities, little research or discussion has addressed such programs and their connections to the field of sport and exercise psychology. Within this final section, we expand upon our previous discussions and recommendations by introducing the reader to three existing groups/programs that connect social justice and sport in ways that promote citizenship and democratic engagement. Lastly, we discuss the potential impact of such groups on the field of sport and exercise psychology and on their participants.

Northeastern University’s Center for the Study of Sport in Society. Created in 1984 by Richard Lapchick, the mission of the Northeastern University’s Center for the Study of Sport in Society is “to increase awareness of sport and its relation to society and to develop programs that identify problems, offer solutions, and promote the benefits of sport” (www.sportinsociety.org/mission.html). More specifically, the Center is founded on the belief that through our sport communities and those involved in sport, positive social change can occur. The Center is dedicated to six programs that encourage and foster such values as inclusion, diversity, civic engagement, violence prevention and sportsmanship (among others). One unique component to each of the Center’s programs is that its staff and trainers are made up of high school, college and professional athletes – each of whom serve as the program’s “agents” for change. The six programs are: Athletes in Service to America (AIS), Disability in Sport Program, Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) Program, the National Consortium for Academics and Sports (NCAS), Project TEAMWORK, and Urban Youth Sports (see www.sportinsociety.org for an in-depth description of each program).

Many of the programs are targeted at youth, collegiate student-athletes and non-athletes through the use of interactive training sessions. The mission of each program, while unique, is to raise awareness about inequality, discrimination, violence, and teach practical skills aimed at empowering individuals with options to effect change in their respective communities. For example, Athletes in Service to America (AIS) uses student-athletes to help promote physical activity and sport involvement within urban youth communities. Student-athletes are also trained to provide educational sessions devoted to diversity and conflict resolution, violence prevention, and health care to these populations

Educating for Justice. Educating for Justice (EFJ) is a non-profit organization dedicated to raising awareness about issues of injustice and implementing programming (i.e., online resources, filmmaking, educational events) targeted at social change (www.educatingforjustice.org). EFJ developed in 2000 as part of a campaign to increase awareness of the labor abuse practices of Olympic apparel sponsors (Nike, Adidas) for the 2000 Olympic Games. Jim Keedy, an assistant soccer coach at Saint John's University, learned of sweatshop conditions of Nike workers and raised the issue to Saint John's athletic director, who was at the time in the process of signing a \$3.5 million dollar endorsement deal with Nike. Not surprisingly, upon raising the issue with the administration, Keedy was encouraged to "wear Nike and drop the issue...or resign" (www.educatingforjustice.org). Keedy resigned. In order to further investigate and bring attention to the issue, Keedy and his friend Leslie Kretzu traveled to Indonesia to investigate the working and living conditions of Nike's and Adidas' (among other companies) factory workers. For one month, Keedy and Kretzu documented (through film and journaling) the lives of those factory workers. Their documentation brought national and global attention to the abusive practices within Indonesian sweatshops, in particular those sweatshops responsible for the manufacturing of Nike and Adidas apparel and equipment.

Since their initial month of study, Keedy and Kretzu have continued to travel to Indonesia, and with the help of factory workers, have educated people about the injustices faced within these sweatshops. Today, Keedy and Kretzu provide educational events for high school and college students (as well as student-athletes) targeted at increasing awareness of global injustices. In 2005, *SWEAT: A story of solidarity with Indonesian sweatshop workers*, is scheduled to be released and will give further voice to Indonesian factory workers.

Women's Sport Foundation. The Women's Sport Foundation, developed in 1974 by tennis legend Billie Jean King is dedicated to "advancing the lives of girls and women through sports and physical activity" (www.womenssportfoundation.org). Two recent programs which have received national attention include GoGirlGo! (www.gogirlgo.com) and It Takes a Team: Making Sports Safe for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Athletes and Coaches (www.womenssportfoundation.org). GoGirlGo! is a "multi-faceted program created to help promote physical activity among girls ages 8 -18 years" (www.gogirlgo.com). The goal of GoGirlGo! is to encourage one million girls to become physically active and to maintain their (the one million girls') activity. To do so, the program uses a variety of methods including a mentoring approach where physically active adult females (and males) are encouraged to impact "one girl at a time." These active adult females and males are asked to pledge that at least one girl they influence will become active (www.gogirlgo.com – "get a girl active"). In addition, the program hosts a variety of GoGirlGo! Days in which groups of girls are educated about the benefits of physical activity and introduced to various forms of movement. The program also supplies free curriculum to teachers and coaches, providing them with the necessary resources to educate girls on the importance of physical activity.

The second WSF program was developed by Martina Navratilova through WSF and is called “It Takes a Team! Making Sports Safe for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Athletes and Coaches” (www.homophobiainsport.com). It is a curriculum that is available to athletes, coaches, teachers, and administrators. The educational program which includes a video, safe zone stickers, poster and detailed curriculum provides the necessary tools to educate sport participants, parents, coaches and administrators (as well as other professionals working in the sport context) about the ramifications of homophobia, ways in which to promote fair policy guidelines for teams, and to recognize openly lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender athletes (educational materials are available at www.homophobiainsport.com).

In summary, each of these programs represents an opportunity for sport psychology consultants to plug in and serve as an example to the student-athletes they work with and/or to have a discussion with their athletes about the ways they both are participating in making their communities more socially just through such efforts. “Each one teaches one” is a motto we think consultants can utilize to become more involved in their closest constituency group, namely student-athletes. In fact, we believe it is only through such efforts – and perhaps consultants are in *the* prime spot to take on such a challenge because most are not paid by their athletic departments - that social change will occur in the conservative sphere of collegiate sport.

Conclusions

Sport psychology researchers, teachers, and consultants have the potential to regulate and prevent discrimination and abuses of power from happening to athletes and even to fight on their behalf. However, as we have discussed in this paper, the current discourse within the applied domain has not made significant strides towards becoming what we have termed “rebel” practitioners. The fact that even standard texts used by most of the professionals in the field fail to address issues of discrimination and power indicates that anything resembling an activist sport psychology is some ways off. However, as we have outlined, there are ways that individuals concerned with nudging the field forward towards the new cultural studies-infused paradigm can engage. Whether it be through incorporating literature related to issues such as sexual harassment, homophobia, racism, and masculinity into course texts or readers, by becoming more aware and critical of the power dynamics of college sport, or by forming coalitions with social justice groups within and outside of sport, there are, as we have stated, degrees of freedom within the space of sport psychology for practitioners to begin.

¹Our colleagues Diane Whaley (University of Virginia) who studies exercise and aging and Gail Dummer (Michigan State University) who studies differently abled athletes as well as others engaged in this work might take offense at the marginalization of their research foci from such a perspective!

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